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THE

*School
Counselor*

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN THE GUIDANCE PROGRAM.. .	43
THE STUDENT AUTOBIOGRAPHY—A NEGLECTED TOOL IN GUIDANCE.....	54

The School Counselor

JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION

N. HARRY CAMP, JR., *Editor*
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Towson 4, Maryland

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APGA Headquarters

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3800 Washington Avenue
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Our President Writes

The strength of any organized group depends upon the active participation of the individual members. You have just recently had two opportunities to influence the future developments of ASCA. Did you cast your vote in the election for officers and board members? Did you return your ballot expressing your approval or disapproval of changes in the Constitution? ASCA has been making steady and healthy growth. It continues to gain membership at a rapid rate. Douglas Dillenbeck and his fine state membership chairmen are really doing an excellent job. However, ASCA's future lies in the hands of its members. It is your privilege and your responsibility to grasp every opportunity to influence and direct the growth of your professional organization.

Dr. Harry Smallenburg, your President-Elect, has been busy appointing committees and making plans for the year 1957-58. He and his officers will be ready to spring into action at the close of the 1957 Convention. Dr. Smallenburg will welcome letters giving your ideas and suggestions for ASCA's program next year.

Once more may we remind you that the 1957 Convention Program, under the leadership of Miss Alice Moore, of Dearborn, Michigan, is going to provide an opportunity for you to meet the outstanding people in the guidance field, to share new techniques, to gain insight through reports on research, and to make field trips into industry. Plan now to be in Detroit from April 14 to 19, 1957.

Your President has had the opportunity to participate in some very interesting meetings. In November, at the invitation of Dean Keppel of Harvard, she was privileged to attend the annual meeting of the American Council on Education, Council on Cooperation in Teacher Education. Counselors will be happy to know that the discussions were definitely guidance oriented, and that recommendations made included calling for increased guidance and counseling services in colleges and universities preparing teachers. Even more encouraging was the very definite recommendation that courses in guidance and closely related subjects be a part of the teacher education program on the under graduate level.

In December your President represented ASCA in an NEA workshop conducted by its National Safety Commission. The purpose was to plan a career brochure in the area of traffic safety. Dr. Frank L. Sievers, of the U. S. Office of Education, was chairman of the meetings. Dr. Clarence W. Failor, of the University of Colorado, and Dr. Charles G. Morehead, of the University of Arkansas, and your President were present in an advisory relation to a group of experts in the many areas of traffic and traffic safety. Watch for a brochure on job opportunities in this area.

Editorial

Many articles are published in the field of education. I call your attention to two which appeared recently in the *New York Times-Education in Review*. These are both of significance to school counselors because they emphasize: (1) the vital need for the services of professionally competent school counselors, and (2) the necessity for counselors being adequately informed and proficient in interpreting facts.

It may well be true that these are the pleas of administrators and teachers for adequate guidance services. The true worth of the counselor is beginning to be recognized but the battle is not won. We cannot afford to do a half-job or an inadequate job. Therefore school counselors might well consider these pleas as a challenge to be as well informed as is possible and to expand and improve the efficiency of the services they render.

One of the articles cited the continuing troublesome problem of discipline in the nation's classrooms. It quoted a recent study by Professor Herbert Zeitlin of Stanford University. Among other things, it was found that 442 teachers cited 41 per cent of the 12,023 students studied as being reported for at least one disciplinary offence. In the teacher's opinion the twelve most prevalent problems were: disturbance, disobedience, disrespect, misrepresentation, ignoring health and safety factors, smoking, fighting, property damage, profanity and obscenity, gambling, theft, and cheating. Eighty-two per cent of the problems fall into the classifications of disturbance, disobedience, and disrespect, all of which are typical of adolescent behavior. Problems of cheating, gambling and fighting were reported least, each with less than one per cent. Dr. Zeitlin observes that this is contrary to the impression created in the public mind.

The most significant thing for counselors was found among Dr. Zeitlin's conclusions: "Teachers may be aided through the services of a *professional counselor*, student courts, and in-service and college training programs." Surely this contains a challenge for all school counselors.

Another article, also appearing in *Education Review*, and authored by Benjamin Fine, discussed the problem of selecting the right student for the right college. The article was inspired by a meeting of some 500 college presidents, deans, and admission directors with the staffs of the College Entrance Examination Board and the Educational Records Bureau. The problem discussed is a major one because of the existence of two other problems: (1) the increasing number of high school graduates who seek to enter college, and (2) colleges are in a bad way financially due to the increase in operating costs.

The chief concern to school counselors was the fact that admission directors were generally agreed that there was much misinformation about

Continued on page 60

The Role of the Teacher in the Guidance Program¹

IRA J. GORDON

Associate-Professor of Education, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida²

What is meant by guidance? For the purposes of this paper, the following five points will serve as a definition for guidance.

1. *The organization of information by the school about the child and the child's community for the purpose of helping the child to learn to make wise decisions for himself concerning his own future.* This implies a need for a wide variety of information, localized and centralized and known to the teachers who are working with the youngsters in the classroom. It also implies that this information has one purpose, that of helping a youngster understand himself so that he can grow to his own maximum.

2. *The organization of life experiences within the school situation so that the child is provided with situations in which he feels himself completely accepted, in which he is enabled to "take stock" of his potentialities, accept his limitations without threat, and develop a realistic picture of himself and the world around him.* This means the provision of experience in which he can test himself and the world around him so that he will not develop a false conception of either himself or the world. This testing, however, must be done in an atmosphere which permits him to be open to the meaning of his experiences. If he is scared, if he is hesitant, if he is evaluated harshly by the people around him,—either by the school or the other children,—if he feels pressures for skill or performance he is not capable of producing, then the experience will not permit him to evaluate it and to learn and grow from the experience.

3. *The provision for satisfactory group experiences in which successful leadership and membership roles are learned and in which the group is able to set goals and solve problems dealing with interpersonal relations.* There are many evidences in our American society of the need for knowing how to work effectively with others in group situations. Part of the guidance responsibility is to provide our youngsters in school with opportunities for learning how to work effectively in group situations with their peers.

4. *The provision for opportunities for the child to understand and value his uniqueness and to value and understand his relatedness to others.* There is a

¹ A condensation of the paper read at ASCA convention, March 27, 1956, Washington, D. C.

Some of the following remarks are parts of chapters 1 and 8 of *The Teacher as a Guidance Worker*, Harper and Brothers, 1956, N. Y.

² Formerly Associate Professor, Institute for Child Study, University of Maryland.

"clear and present danger" in the increasing expectation in the American society of groupness and ability to relate to others. While this is an important value and one which needs to be learned in the school situation, there is a danger of a loss of the individuality of the child. One must learn how to belong without surrender. We are concerned with the uniqueness aspect of the individual. It is a guidance responsibility to enable the child to understand and accept himself and to understand and accept his needs for belonging and for group participation so that he is able to make wise decisions about how he will maintain his individuality and at the same time enhance the society in which he lives.

5. *The provision of the above experiences and opportunities for all children.* It becomes increasingly necessary for guidance to become a preventive program; to become a program which is concerned at the teacher level with all the children in the school. In this way, specialists will be able to work with those who are in need of individual help but the great responsibility for carrying on effective guidance will rest in the classroom. If effective guidance work with all the children in the classroom can be done, the specialist will be able to do effective work with the youngsters who need additional kinds of help and additional kinds of experiences. But if guidance programs concentrate on picking up the pieces, the kinds of opportunities and experiences all children need will be lost.

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

The five-fold definition defines the scope of the task. How much of this is, should be, and can be incorporated into the normal role of the teacher in the classroom? The teacher is directly and intimately involved in all guidance activities. He plays a key role in the total program, although there are definite responsibilities which are relegated to specialists. This holds true at all levels of education—from kindergarten through college. The specialist is necessary, but the teacher is the keystone of any good guidance program. There has been a trend toward recognizing this through the last two decades at least. Strang has been one of the people instrumental in focusing attention on the teacher, Prescott and his colleagues centered their efforts on working with teachers.

Most guidance work must be done in the classroom, by teachers who possess the guidance viewpoint and incorporate it in their teaching and other relationships with students. Indeed, it might be said that: "the principal area of student personnel work is teacher-student relationships, not occasional interviews with specialized counselors." (2, p. 276) It is the function of the teacher, then, to make his teaching as closely related to the individual student as possible, to recognize that he is working with students as well as teaching subject matter. This does not mean that sub-

ject matter is unimportant. It does mean that a major task of the teacher is the study of students. There has been an increasing awareness at all levels of education that we need to concern ourselves with all phases of a student's development, not just his intellectual achievement.

There is a common ground upon which both the teacher and the guidance specialist can meet. Symonds says:

1. Both teachers and therapists should treat children as individuals with potentialities for progressively taking over direction of themselves.
2. Both teachers and counselors should be warm, friendly, outgoing, pleasant and kindly.
3. Both teachers and therapists are counseled to accept the child as he is . . . it is possible to accept the person while at the same time rejecting what the person does.
4. Teachers and therapists may also be expected to be permissive . . . but to a degree only . . .
5. Both teachers and therapists should be sensitive to feelings expressed by the child and should help the child to be aware of them. (7-10)

The teacher, in this concept of guidance as preventive, is a mental hygienist. He is at the forefront, in the most sensitive location. "If we are to deal adequately with the mental health of all children, it becomes increasingly clear that the teacher has a major role. All children attend school, and the teacher is the only person with psychological training who comes in contact with all children." (9, P. 9-10)

This does not mean that the teacher's training is the same as that of the professional psychologist or mental hygienist. There are limits to the teacher's areas of adequacy and training that do and should prevent him from encroaching on the professional. At the same time, courses in human development, educational psychology and other pre-service and in-service courses help equip the teacher with certain fundamental concepts and skills that should enable him to serve as a major member of the guidance and mental hygiene team.

Should the Teacher Counsel?

Robinson defines counseling as covering: ". . . all types of two-person situations in which one person, the client, is helped to adjust more effectively to himself and his environment. It includes the use of the interview to obtain and give information, to coach or teach, to bring about increased maturity and to aid with decision-making and therapy." (S: 3). Such a broadly conceived definition has strings attached. It does not include the nature of the training and personality required of the counselor. We certainly recognize that there are many two-person situations in which information is exchanged, and in which coaching or teaching occurs which are *not* counseling. The focus is on the provision of a situation in which the individual is enabled to change at his own rate and in his own way. Are teachers able to do this?

Many professional counselors resist the notion of the teacher functioning as a counselor. A major reason offered is the lack of training and concern on the part of the teacher.

It is certainly true that the present education of teachers does not prepare them to be counselors. The orientation, particularly of secondary-school personnel, is still largely subject-matter.

But, in spite of the lack of education in psychology, counseling technics, supervised experiences and perhaps a lack of insight into human relationships and into self, teachers are placed in many situations which fit the definition of a counseling situation.

While there is general agreement about the present lack of preparation of teachers for counseling, many counselors envision teachers working as counselors as a highly desirable goal. For example, Arbuckle believes: "counseling should be performed by all teachers... (this) is the hoped-for ideal, but when it does become an actuality . . . all teachers will be persons with training in the field of human development and adjustment." (1, p. 10) Wrenn discusses the home economics teacher as a counselor (10) while Strang (8, p. 240-241) and Sanderson (6, p. 288-294) discuss the role and problems of the teacher-counselor, a person formally assigned to both responsibilities in the secondary school.

Our point of view is that the teacher is not a professional counselor, but that he serves in many situations as a front-line counselor; that the reality factors of school life require him to know and understand the counseling process and point of view, and that he can function effectively in helping individuals through the establishment of counseling relationships. Our answer, then, to the question, should the teacher counsel is a firm "yes" accompanied by an equally firm "but."

Limits on the Teacher

The teacher is not and cannot be a psychotherapist, working with seriously disturbed children; he cannot do this not only because he lacks clinical preparation, but also because this is not his role. He has neither the time nor the type of situation that permits him to function in such a way. As Hahn and MacLean so aptly state: "The classroom teacher is an important member of the personnel work team but he cannot be groundskeeper and pitch from the box at the same time." (3, p. 23) The teacher acts as a referral agent (see later section on referral) rather than attempting to work himself with such children.

The teacher is limited further by the nature of his other responsibilities and the time available to him for individual conferencing. A clinical counselor, in working with a client, can focus all his energies for a period of time on that relationship; can set up a regular schedule of appointments

with the client and can establish a long term structured relationship with that client. The teacher can do none of these.

Counseling by the teacher is sandwiched in during the course of a busy day, almost on an impromptu basis created by some pressing situation and without the removal of all the other forces at work. It is almost a haphazard process, on a catch-as-catch-can basis, of a short-time and short-term nature. This poses severe limitations on the work of the teacher as a counselor, but does not eliminate the necessity for him to serve in this way. Rather, it makes the classroom situation a place in which group work and individual counseling are proceeding virtually side by side and in which both are always serving as complementary to the other. This offers many rich opportunities for counseling in a reality setting that may have many positive advantages along with the difficulties it poses.

Role Confusion

A particular limit on the work of the teacher as counselor is the concept that is held about "teacher." Arbuckle points out two areas of role confusion: "There are those who will say that the teacher cannot be an effective counselor because of his disciplinary role" and "others may say that the teacher cannot be an effective counselor because the good teacher has a friendly relationship with the students, whereas one must maintain a professional relationship in order to do effective counseling." (1, p. 10, 11) He disputes both these ideas. The teacher who is a student of human behavior, and who attempts to work with his students as an enabler does *not* need to have his role ambiguous or confused. He does not switch from "disciplinarian" to "counselor," from "friend" to "professional." There is a consistency of role and a consistency of behavior on his part, because his goals as a teacher and as a counselor are the same.

The confusion comes not from his switch, but because of the expectancies and perceptions of students and parents. The student may ask himself, "How can I tell him I didn't study because I was worried about not having a date?" because he is not clear about the teacher's interest in him as a person not as someone who is supposed to do homework. Of course, teachers may be caught in some confusion of roles as they work out their own beliefs and build skills. A good deal of this depends upon the teacher's understanding of his own self-system. If the teacher is not clear about how he feels about himself, it will be difficult for him to provide a fairly consistent framework upon which the students can build their concepts of his role. If when he is "teacher" he does not "tolerate any nonsense" then he cannot as "counselor" suddenly be "permissive" without confusing the students and cutting off opportunities for them to establish counseling relationships with him.

The school situation in general, with all its emphasis on evaluation and judgment of performance, increases the difficulty of the teacher in his efforts to accept and understand behavior in a non-evaluative fashion as the counselor must. In counseling, the locus of evaluation is within the self; unless this is also true to some extent in the classroom situation, there will be role confusion.

In order to function as both teacher and counselor to the same students, the teacher has to clarify for himself his concepts of what is the "job-description" of both, and work through his own understandings and feelings concerning the nature of the learning process and human development. Unless he can develop some insights into the essential similarities between "teacher" and "counselor" and resolve for himself what may appear to be rather divergent goals and expectancies of the two, both he and his students will be hampered by shifts in role and confusion and ambiguity of role.

This does not mean that teaching and counseling are exactly the same (although they are a good deal closer than one might imagine) but that the goals are essentially the same, although the emphases may differ and the degree of deep-feeling involvement may be quite different. There can be no such dichotomy as teaching being concerned only with intellectual processes and counseling with emotional processes. Both are concerned with the whole person in dynamic interaction with his world.

Relations with Other School Personnel

In many school systems, there are other people who are "specialists" whose job it is to do general clinical counseling or remedial work in some aspect of the educational process. How does the teacher work with these people to aid the child? The teacher who has attempted to utilize human development concepts and the scientific approach to understanding the forces at work in the life of a child can serve as a valuable resource person to the specialist. Not only is he able to detect those children in need of special assistance but also he will be able to give the specialist information about the child and his environment that will enable the specialist to move more rapidly.

There needs to be a mutual understanding of the roles performed by the personnel workers, remedial teachers, visiting teachers etc., and the classroom teacher. Both need to feed information to each other. There is nothing quite so frustrating to the classroom teacher as to refer a child for special help, know that he is receiving it while he still is a member of the class, and to be told nothing about what is happening to him or to be given no help concerning how he might supplement the work of the specialist in his classroom. Certainly, professional ethics and the protection of

the privacy of the child are vital, but it is important that specialists recognize that the teacher *is* a professional person and plays a vital role in aiding the child. The specialist and teacher must work together as a team, supplying each other with data, offering suggestions and hypotheses to each other, and attempting to complement the work of each other.

Case conferences, in which all those in the school who have relationships with a particular child sit down and discuss in detail all they know about the child and set up suggested "action hypotheses" for those who work most closely with him, is a way in which teachers and specialists can complement each other. It requires a professional outlook, an understanding of the dynamics of behavior, and a mutual trust. It also implies that all are primarily in agreement about the goals of their work. In this respect, case conferences can aid the teacher clarify his ideas of himself as a teacher and a counselor. Case conferences thus can serve as in-service education experiences for the teacher in aiding him develop skill in counseling as well as a method of communicating among school personnel.

THE REFERRAL PROCESS

A major role of the teacher is as a referral agent. He needs to ask himself: To Whom Can a Child be Referred?

The "first line" after the teacher is composed of the other personnel associated with the school; the principal, the guidance counselor (if there is one) the visiting teacher or school social worker, the school psychologist, the remedial reading and/or speech personnel, if they exist. Many school systems have rather limited resources for helping at this point. Some districts have one person in the district (which may be as large as a county) who is trained to do professional counseling at a deeper level than the teacher.

Out-of-school resources, such as mental hygiene clinics, family agencies, religious organizations may be the "second line" after school resources have been explored.

In some cases, referral may have to be made to agencies outside the community. The State Departments of Education and of Health and the institutions of higher education within the State, the State medical association or psychological association may then be used to help locate proper facilities.

It is important in referral that the teacher understand the function and philosophy of the agency so that he doesn't refer a child to an agency which is not equipped to work at the appropriate level with the child. It is equally important that referral be seen by both the agency and the teacher as the beginning of a partnership arrangement between the two rather than as a shift in responsibility for service from one to the other.

This suggests that referrals should be made only to those agencies that the teacher knows will consider him part of the therapeutic team rather than as an outsider who is given the usual professional gobbledegook when he asks for information or expresses interest in the role he can play in the classroom to supplement the work of the agency.

The teacher needs to answer several questions as he builds up his knowledge of referral resources:

1. Who and what is available—in school, community, and state?
2. What type of service does each agency consider to be within its professional function?
3. What communication system does the agency have for "feedback" to the teacher?
4. What is the basic philosophy of the agency? Is it in harmony with the school?
5. How qualified are the agency personnel to do the job they see as theirs to do?
6. What is the cost of service? Is there any system for aiding those unable to pay?
7. How long a waiting list does it have? Will there be too long a time lag between referral and appointment? (Some agencies may not be able to be of service for several months except in emergencies.)

There are, then, a mixture of philosophical, qualitative and financial considerations that are connected with the choice of appropriate agency or service for the child.

When Should a Child be Referred?

We have repeatedly stressed that the teacher as a counselor is not a therapist, and should not overstep the limits of his role. Those children, then, who require more help than this are youngsters who should be referred.

For example, Strang cites five situations when referral is indicated, and warns:

Hands Off, Teachers:

1. Health and physical conditions that require the attention of a nurse or doctor.
2. Severe emotional disturbance, indicated by extreme preoccupation and persistent day-dreaming or flight from reality, unhappiness or depression, thoughts of suicide, extreme over-conscientiousness, withdrawal from social contacts, lack of interest in anything, feeling of guilt or personal responsibility for everything that goes wrong, extreme neglect of personal appearance, very marked distractability, unfounded suspicion and fear.
3. "Problems deep-rooted in home conditions."
4. "A prolonged deviation from the usual pattern of behavior—for instance, from sociability to unfriendliness."
5. "Problems too deep for expression— inability to talk over the difficulty to put it into words." (8, p. 66)

In addition, referral may be indicated for the child with less severe problems who is seeking vocational and/or educational guidance and information. In such cases, it is not that the youngster needs help of a "deeper" sort, but that he needs help different from that which the teacher can furnish. However, some counseling sessions with the teacher may be useful *before* referral so that the child has the opportunity to explore whether or not this (educational or vocational guidance and information) is really what he wishes or it has served as a "socially acceptable" entree into a counseling situation.

How is a Child Referred?

This suggests, then, that the referral process is not a simple two step operation, namely (1) identification of the person who needs help and (2) sending him over to "get it." Referral usually takes place after teacher and pupil have had several individual conferences. It is a *mutual* operation, rather than a unilateral one on the part of the teacher. Several "ground rules" seem to be indicated:

1. "In order that the referral be effective, it is essential that the client share in the responsibility. Being referred to the counselor often becomes a meaningful experience to the client. Although the (teacher) cannot quite realize its full implications for the client, he can help him accept such a referral as a part of the counseling process." (5, p. 70)
2. The decision should be the pupil's unless he is too seriously disturbed and unable to accept such responsibility. If he is not able to make the decision, he should *at the very least*, be actively involved in the process.
3. The purposes of the referral should be clear to all concerned, pupil, parents, other school personnel, the agency. "The counselor must also acquaint the parents with the nature and value of the specialist's treatment and enlist their cooperation. Many parents do not understand that much psychiatric work is devoted to helping normal people use their energy to best advantage." (8, p. 67) In many school systems, referral cannot be made without the consent of the parents.
4. The services that the agency can perform and its way of working should be as clear as possible to the pupil and the parents. The agency should not be endowed with magical powers.
5. Referral is not a disciplinary process. It should not be used as a club—"Either you go to see the counselor, or . . ."
6. The agency person and the teacher who is making the referral should have a conference and should set up a system for the mutual exchange of pertinent information.
7. In all cases, the integrity and individuality of the child must be pro-

pected. Referral is a private not a public process even though many people may be involved in it.

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS FOR GUIDANCE WORK

In order to "qualify" as a guidance worker in conjunction with his regular classroom responsibilities there are three main areas of need which the teacher should be able to satisfy. First, he needs to possess certain types of attitudes toward people; second, he needs some basic understandings about human behavior; and third, he needs some understandings about certain interpersonal processes and some skills in problem-solving and in action research.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to develop this, but a brief resume may suffice:

The teacher needs to possess warm, open, accepting attitudes toward people. He cannot learn to accept people through intellectual experience alone. He can only learn to accept people by feeling, by taking part in an experience in which he himself feels accepted and in which he himself feels comfortable.

The teacher needs to develop an understanding and appreciation for the child as a growing organism. He needs to understand the role of community forces including the family in the development of the child's self. He needs to know about the role of his peers in shaping his behavior and finally he needs to understand the role that the child's self plays as a dynamic force in the total field of forces consisting of the organism and its social environment. There is another reason why the teacher needs these insights from the various behavioral sciences in addition to using the information "per se." He must be a referral agent, a colleague of the specialist, a member of the total school and agency team. "To work most effectively with these other members of the (multiprofessional) team, the teacher needs to be acquainted with their different languages, their significant insights . . ." (7, p. 30).

In short, teachers need understandings of human behavior in order to work positively with children and relate themselves functionally with all the personnel interested in the development of the child.

Teachers need to develop skill in observing and analyzing behavior in terms of the above concepts. Furthermore, there is need for understanding of and skill in the interpersonal relationships involved in group processes and in the individual counseling process, both with children and with parents. Lastly, skill is needed in learning how to define school problems, work them through and arrive at some satisfactory solution. This is what might be called action research.

CONCLUSION

It may be that, if one accepts the above notions concerning the teacher's role in the guidance program, a major role of the guidance personnel will be defined in relation to it. The professional guidance worker can enhance and facilitate the development of teachers through:

1. Aiding in the creation in the school of the kind of accepting climate that permits teachers to have experiential learnings in being accepted and valued.
2. Serving as resource persons and leaders in in-service education activities.
3. Assisting in developing the referral procedures.
4. Working in conjunction with teachers in defining guidance problems and carrying out action research projects to solve these in the local situation.

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The Student Autobiography—A Neglected Tool in Guidance

KENNETH B. HOYT

Assistant Professor of Education, State University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa

There are many student appraisal procedures available to the school counselor which will contribute to our dual purposes of understanding pupils better and increasing pupil self-understanding. One of the potentially most valuable and yet least utilized of these is the student autobiography. In a study made in California, for example, Schaffer (2) found that, among the school counselors he surveyed, only one in four had ever used a student autobiography and only one in two had ever seen an autobiography written by a student. In this same study, Schaffer was able to demonstrate the usefulness of the autobiography in revealing emotional maladjustments in students.

It is the purpose of this paper to present some information concerning the student autobiography in terms of: (1) The rationale behind its use; (2) Some suggestions for collecting autobiographies; (3) An example of a student autobiography; and (4) Some examples of possible ways of interpreting the student autobiography.

THE PLACE OF THE STUDENT AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN STUDENT APPRAISAL PROCEDURES

The student autobiography is a good example of two basic principles which can be applied to student appraisal procedures in general. In the first place, the relative value of any appraisal tool must always be considered in relation to the specific task it is being asked to accomplish. Under certain given circumstances, any appraisal tool may be considered to be the "best" or the "worst" one could employ. This can be demonstrated easily for the student autobiography. Secondly, any appraisal tool takes on added significance when the information it yields is combined with information obtained from other instruments. Later in this paper, an attempt will be made to demonstrate this principle.

There are three major *guidance* purposes which can be achieved in part through the use of the student autobiography. These are: (1) The autobiography can be used as a means for the student to sit down, reflect, and take a good look at himself as he has developed thus far in life; (2) It can be used as a means of collecting additional factual information concerning pupil characteristics particularly in the area of home and family background; and (3) It can be used as one means of helping the counselor obtain a better picture of the way in which the student is perceiving himself

—of his self concept. Of these three guidance purposes, the third can be generally considered as being of major importance. Limitations of space preclude the development of each of these purposes here, but it is hoped that the reader will be able to see their applications in the example presented later in this paper.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR COLLECTING STUDENT AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

The first decision one must make in attempting to collect student autobiographies is whether a *structured* or an *unstructured* form is to be utilized. The structured form is one where the student writes from a definite outline or list of sub-topics. In the unstructured form, the student is simply told to write the story of his life. Danielson and Rothney (1) have demonstrated certain advantages for each approach. In general, they found that *more* student problems were uncovered when the structured form was used. More *serious* problems were uncovered using the unstructured form. This is a judgment which each counselor must make for himself.

If a structured form is used, it seems to this writer that better autobiographies are obtained when the student is instructed to think as far back in his life as he can and tell a separate story for each area. An *example* of a list of topics which might be used is: (1) Our Family at Home; (2) Friends I Have Had; (3) A History of My School Life; (4) Happy Things That Have Happened to Me; (5) Sad Things in My Life; (6) My Biggest Accomplishment; (7) My Biggest Disappointment; (8) Occupations I Have Thought About; and (9) A Prediction of My Future. It is obvious that any counselor can think for himself regarding topics he would like to include. There is no one "best" pattern to follow.

At this point, it seems desirable to present a list of "Do's and Don't's" for the collection of student autobiographies. Any such list is dangerous because special exceptions could be found for any generalization one makes. On the other hand, if no generalizations are presented in terms of recommended practices, it is doubtful that this paper will be very helpful to anyone. The reader is going to have to interpret each generalization in terms of its applicability to his own local situation. With this caution in mind then, the following list of "Do's and Don't's" is presented:

1. *Don't* collect autobiographies often. For most cases, three times in the student's school life (late elementary school, junior high school, and senior high school) will be sufficient. When students are asked to write autobiographies every year, they soon become routine and lose much of their flavor.

2. *Do* collect autobiographies as part of a unit in self-analysis. Autobiographies which are just "assigned" with either no reason or a very flimsy one are usually not revealing. The student should be able to see where the autobiography fits in with the other things he is doing and something regarding what he can hope to accomplish by writing it.

3. *Don't* try to collect autobiographies under the pretense of written English assignments. They *can* be assignments in English but this should not be the primary reason why students are writing them. When students are overly concerned about grammatical form and sentence structure, the autobiography is seldom very revealing.

4. *Do* let students write their autobiographies in class. They shouldn't be given a great deal of time to reflect on what they are writing as some of the most revealing expressions are those written in a spontaneous manner.

5. *Dont* make the writing of the autobiography a long, drawn-out assignment. Two class periods should be sufficient for its completion and many schools have done it in one. When this assignment is stretched out to a week or more, students tire of it.

6. *Do* pick the teacher carefully who is going to ask students to write autobiographies. The ideal teacher is not necessarily the one who would win a student popularity poll, but he is the one whom the students respect the most, trust the most, and have the most confidence in. Better autobiographies will result if this assignment is delegated to a teacher rather than to any particular subject area.

7. *Don't* try to fool the students in terms of what is to be done with the autobiographies. If students are told they are to be kept in strict confidence by the teacher, then this confidence must be kept. In order for them to be maximally useful, it is recommended that students be told these will become a part of their cumulative guidance record available to all professional staff personnel interested in helping students. While this procedure may result in some loss of revealing statements, it will make the collection of the autobiography relatively more worthwhile from the standpoint of the total guidance program.

8. *Do* give each student an opportunity to discuss his autobiography in an individual counseling interview. In general, it is not a good idea to have students read their autobiographies aloud to the class. Neither is it advisable to *question* a student about what he has written. This should be an opportunity for the student to learn more about himself.

9. *Don't* expect every autobiography to be very revealing. Many students never write a revealing autobiography. Some of them choose not to reveal anything about themselves. Some of them lack sufficient self-insight to write revealing statements. By the same token, don't try to make elaborate interpretations of every section of the autobiography. If you can see nothing significant about a particular section, one of the reasons may be simply because there is nothing significant written.

10. *Do* plan to use the autobiography along with other appraisal tools. It is a valuable instrument in itself, but its value is greatly enhanced if it is interpreted along with the many other appraisal tools available in the total school guidance program.

AN EXAMPLE OF A STUDENT AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The following autobiography was written by a 10th grade girl who was a member of a home economics class. Look at the entire autobiography first and see what sort of general impression is received. Then read it again noting the parts which are underlined. These underlined sections are those which appear to be most significant in terms of the picture this girl has of herself. Following some of these underlines are comments placed in parentheses attempting to illustrate the interpretative picture derived from the girl's comments.

Autobiography of Gloria

"Before I entered school, I can remember my sister and I playing with paper dolls. We would take the dolls, doll-buggies, dishes, and other play-things across the street and play house in some thick shrubbery. Once, while there, my sister got too close to a swimming pool and fell in. I became very frightened and ran home for my mother. My mother found her floating, like a rubber ball, around on the water. After rescuing her, she scolded us both.

Several incidents that happened in the elementary grades stand out in my mind—in the first grade a number of us girls covered our faces with lipstick during recess; in the third grade I liked a boy for the first time; in the fourth grade I skipped school with another girl and I shall never forget the strapping I got from my father. (This is interesting in view of the fact that at the time this autobiography was written, the father had apparently lost all interest in what happened to the girl. It shows he was concerned at one time.) In the sixth grade I fell from a high swing and broke my wrist, and in that same grade I got hit with a stick and had to have four stitches taken in my face. I thought I would be scarred for life and no one would look at me again. (Note her concern over personal appearance. This girl, it turned out, was overly concerned in this area and this was one indication of what is important to her.)

Elgin, Illinois, is the farthest place I have been from home. Often I have been in Minneapolis, Minnesota, as my aunt, who is a beautician, lives there. She has told me she would teach me beautician work, but I don't have the patience for that kind of work. (Self concept.)

Prizes or awards are not for me. I am sure that I shall never accomplish anything that would merit special attention. I am glad when other people receive prizes, but I don't envy them. (Some indication of possible defeatist attitude. Doesn't think very much of herself in terms of special abilities.)

When I had an opportunity last summer, to go to Chicago and my parents wouldn't let me go, I believe that was my biggest disappointment. I put on an act, but it didn't help. (She seems to be trying to be honest with herself.)

In my spare time, I enjoy listening to popular records. True to my race, I love music—all kinds, both classical and jazz. (She's of Italian extraction.)

I wonder if any girl likes to do dishes. I just detest doing them and I make the ordeal worse by putting it off so instead of being unhappy for twenty minutes, I stretch it out to an hour or more. But that's me. That is the way I am. (Again, we get an indication of an "I'm not worth much" attitude.)

The future doesn't particularly bother me or I should say concern me. I just try to be happy each day and let the future take care of itself. I'll just take what comes. Dreams! Yes, like all girls—an actress, an opera singer. But I know I can realize neither. I can sing but not good enough for concert work. Clothes interest me very much. I wish I could have good, smart clothes. (She was one of the best dressed girls in school.) I wish I wore the kind of clothes that would make the kids turn around and say, "Gee, doesn't that Gloria wear good-looking clothes." (Again, an expression of her importance for being physically attractive.) Also I would like to be a good conversationalist and possess a pleasing, attractive personality. Guess I'll try doing something about it. (Example of how the autobiography gets students started thinking more about themselves.) Smart kids, they say, know they need to do something about their personality and then do it. Not that I'm smart, but I can be that smart. (Again, self concept.) I really haven't any ambition and I don't care. (This could mean many things—about the only thing that can be said at this point is that the counselor should be aware of it when counseling with this girl.)

My reputation is my chief problem. At the present time, it isn't very good, but I hope in the future it will be better. I'm working for a good reputation and I hope my friends and acquaintances will give me another chance. One thing I would like to know is will they give me another chance? It really isn't as bad as I make it sound. (It wasn't either.) I suppose everyone gets talked about but it hurts to have your friends talk about you. Well, did I say I didn't have any ambition? Would you say wanting to have a good reputation and be a good dresser, a good conversationalist, and to develop an attractive, pleasing personality is having ambition? If so, I have a little." (Note how just writing about some of these things helps students begin to develop a more realistic picture of themselves.)

SUMMARY

Used by themselves, student autobiographies, *like any other appraisal instrument*, can be dangerous in terms of the impressions they leave. When used in conjunction with a number of other student appraisal procedures, they can become a valuable addition to the school guidance program. They do not take long to collect; their cost is nominal; their potential is great.

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Guidance Services in Westchester County, New York*

CLARENCE C. DUNSMOOR

Director of Guidance Center Board of Cooperative Education Services, Westchester County, New York

Westchester County is divided into ten school districts. Schools have long had full-time counselors and remedial reading specialists. Their services have been built around the philosophy that public schools have a responsibility to all children. Guidance services are not concerned with just problem cases. There is a team approach.

Believing that in order to plan wisely "We must learn the students before we can teach them," their first step was a thorough appraisal through a recent survey. This survey was made using some 11,500 pupils to determine needs. All groups of special education categories were included. The findings indicated 1,453 pupils with speech and hearing handicaps; 314 emotionally disturbed pupils; over 100 mentally retarded pupils, et cetera.

The program to implement the beginning of a special education program includes at this time: 3 speech and hearing therapists; 1 sight conservation teacher; 8 classes for some 100 mentally retarded pupils; 2 classes for those of IQ's below 50; and one coordinator for the education of the mentally retarded. The program is young and plans included many more developments in the future.

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Limited quantities of back copies of *The School Counselor* (beginning with Volume 3—No. 1, Fall, 1955) are available. These can be used for promotional purposes with the permission of the editor. Any ASCA member who desires further information may write the editor.

* This discussion was presented as part of the NVGA-ASCA Joint session on *County Guidance Programs* at the APGA Convention in Washington, D. C., March 23-29, 1956. Additional discussions held as part of this program will be printed in future issues of *The School Counselor*.

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

The November issue of *The School Counselor* was an outstandingly good issue. We thought all of the articles were important.

RUTH E. HOSKINS
Director of Guidance
Haddon Heights High School
New Jersey

To the Editor:

I am writing regarding topics which I should like to see discussed in *The School Counselor*. The following items have long been of interest to me, as a guidance counselor and as a junior high school supervisor:

1. The training of teacher personnel to serve as part of the guidance staff.
2. The supervisor and the guidance program; how to help the supervisor achieve an understanding of the functions of the guidance personnel on his staff.
3. Is individual counseling just picking off the overt problems? How can the counselor reach all who need his help? How can he get to see *all* the children?

JENNIE MONTAG
Assistant-to-Principal
Junior High School #246
Brooklyn, New York

Editorial

Continued from page 42

the college board tests. In particular they said: "In many high schools guidance counselors are appallingly misinformed. Students receive wrong advice. They may be directed to a college for which they are not suited, or they may get discouraged and drop out before they even begin their collegiate career." If this is true, it is indeed a serious indictment of some members of our profession. We owe it to our boys and girls, to colleges, to our profession, and to the nation, to become accurately informed. This article entitled: Problems of Selecting the Right Student for the Right College Are Considered, discussed the abuses which counselors allegedly make of information from college board examinations. It also lists the correct uses of this information. I am sure that the College Entrance Examination Board would be happy to supply any counselor with information which will enable him to become better informed.

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APGA CONVENTION—Detroit—April 14-18, 1957

CLIFFORD E. ERICKSON—The American School Counselors Association is fortunate to have Dean Clifford E. Erickson as their convention luncheon speaker in Detroit in April. Dean Erickson, a nationally known educator and guidance specialist is Dean of the College of Education, Michigan State University. He was formerly director of the Institute of Counseling, Testing, and Guidance for the same institution. Dean Erickson received his Bachelor of Education Degree from Illinois State Teachers College, his Masters and Doctorate Degrees from Northwestern University.

In addition to numerous articles in the field of education, Dean Erickson has written or co-authored many books in education and guidance. He is also a member of many professional and scholastic organizations: The American Association of School Administrators, Michigan Counselors Association, National Educational Association, National Guidance Association, Phi Delta Kappa, and Phi Kappa Phi. He is a past president of the National Vocational Guidance Association.

RALPH RABINOVITCH.—Dr. Ralph Rabinovitch is a nationally known figure in the field of psychotherapy for disturbed children. He is now Director of Hawthorn Center, a division of the State of Michigan planned by the Mental Health Commission. Dr. Rabinovitch was formerly Associate Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Michigan and Director of the Neuropsychiatric Institute of the same institution. He was graduated from McGill University in Canada and is a member of the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, and the American Psychiatric Association. Dr. Rabinovitch will discuss the very timely subject—"The place of psychotherapy in the school program."



